

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present rejection of the claims of the patent application is respectfully requested. Claims 1-6, 8-17, and 21-27 are pending in this application. Claims 12, 13, and 27 are allowed, claims 8 and 11 are objected to, and claims 1-7, 9, 10, 14-17, and 21-26 are rejected. By this amendment, claims 21 and 27 have been amended and new claims 29 and 30 have been added.

Specification

The specification is rejected for failing to provide proper antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. Paragraph [0022] of the specification has been amended to include the proper antecedent basis for permitting bi-directional movement of the panel relative to the bracket. The amendment to the specification does not introduce new matter. The specification supports the that panel is attachable to the bracket by pushing the panel toward the bracket and easily removable from the bracket by pulling the panel away from the bracket.

Claim Rejections- 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1-6, 9-10, 14-17, and 21-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Thau (USPN 4,875,726). Applicant respectfully submits that the cited reference does not teach each and every element of Applicant's claims, as amended.

Claim 1

Claim 1 stands rejected as anticipated by Thau. Claim 1 recites, in part, "a panel easily attachable to and detachable from said bracket, said panel, when attached, hiding said bracket when viewed from the exterior of the tub skirt." Thau does not teach a panel hiding a bracket. Rather, Thau teaches a mount for a car door handle assembly 30. More specifically, Thau teaches a car door handle assembly 30 that mounts to a belt line reinforcement 20 of a car door. An exterior door panel 62 has an aperture 64 positioned such that the car door handle assembly 30 is accessible through the aperture. An escutcheon plate 70 attaches to the car door handle assembly 30 through the aperture 64 and includes a flange 72 that abuts the exterior door panel 62 around the aperture 64. As illustrated in Figure 3, however, the car door handle assembly 30,

when attached to the escutcheon plate 70, does not hide the plate from view, regardless of which side of the door panel the car door handle assembly and plate are viewed from. Thus, because Thau does not teach each and every element of independent claim 1, the rejection of claim 1, along with the claims that dependent therefrom, is not supported by the art of record and should be withdrawn.

Claim 21

Claim 21 stands rejected as anticipated by Thau. Amended claim 21 recites, in part, “wherein the panel is bi-directionally movable *toward and away from the bracket*” (emphasis added). Thau does not teach the claimed bi-directional movement in the direction as claimed. Instead, Thau teaches that the escutcheon plate 70 is *laterally* slideable in the aperture to allow the formations 82, 84, and 86 to intermesh with the formation 38, 40, and 42, respectively, on the handle assembly 30 (see col. 5, lines 3-10). This direction of movement in Thau is 90 degrees different from the claimed bidirectional movement. Thau makes clear that the teeth and ridges prevent movement of the handle assembly 30 toward and away from the flange 72 on the plate 70 (see col. 5, lines 15-19). Thus, Thau does not teach a panel bi-directionally movable toward and away from the bracket, as recited in amended claim 21.

Therefore, because Thau does not teach each and every element of amended independent claim 21, the rejection of amended claim 21, along with the claims that dependent therefrom, is not supported by the art of record and should be withdrawn.

New claims

New claims 29 and 30 are fully supported by the disclosure and are not anticipated by the prior art of record at least due to their dependency from claims 1 and 21, respectively. In addition, these new claims, like other dependent claims, include elements not taught by Thau, thus preventing anticipation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing remarks, Applicants believe that all of the claims in this case are now in condition for allowance and an indication to that effect is respectfully requested. Furthermore, if the Examiner believes that additional discussions or information might advance the prosecution of this case, the Examiner should feel free to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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